



online project: ce.onl_0007
artist: suzanne thorpe and philip white
title: balancing act
year: 2009
format: mp3 download
cover design by contour editions
original file by suzanne thorpe and emf

balancing act, written by collaborators suzanne thorpe and philip white, was composed for electronic music foundation's exhibit sound in the frying pan, an installation of site-specific compositions aboard the lightship frying pan, pier 66 maritime, ny, ny, april 2009. the frying pan is a lightship built in 1929, originally stationed 30 miles offshore from cape fear, north carolina. after being abandoned and sunk for ten years, she was raised, salvaged, outfitted with a new engine, and brought to her new home on manhattan's westside by her current owners, where she still resides.

balancing act was written to allow visitors to reflect on the ship's storied past while immersing them in its present setting. via an accelerometer, the sway of the vessel acted as composer, with its tilt making musical choices by mapping the sensor output to a sound generating software. the sound simultaneously activated the space it was within, as the reflection of pitches off of the surfaces of the ship employed her as an instrument, stimulating harmonics. further determining what a listener heard was his or her location, as harmonics shifted with an individual's position. the composition changed organically with the motion of the ship, allowing for new combinations of sound continuously, a state that, when combined with the sounds of the ship and its environment, created an experience that immersed the listener in the ship's spell. the recording of balancing act featured is a field recording taken from the third day of its installation.

together, suzanne thorpe and philip white collaborate as thenumber46, a flute and feedback duo that work in the realm of unpredictable sounds, creating emergent systems that purposely exploit the volatile. as thenumber46 they have released bleach & ammonia, available on cassette at tape drift and in downloadable form at www.thenumber46.com. they can be heard when inspiration leads them to play in public places.